REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested. Claims 1-14 remain in the application. Claim 15 has been canceled. Claims 1, 8 and 12 have been amended to define the invention more clearly. Additionally, all of the remaining claims have been amended to eliminate the numeric references. Numeric references are not required under U.S. patent law and are given no patentable weight. Accordingly, the amendment to eliminate the numeric references is not a narrowing amendment and is not an amendment entered for purposes of patentability.

Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Griffin. The Examiner correctly noted that Griffin discloses the joint connector with a housing 40, 42 and connecting portions 44, 38 into which mating connectors 46 and 28 are fittable. The Examiner also noted that Griffin has a joint terminal 40 with a plurality of terminal pieces located in both connecting portions 33 and 38. Additionally, the Examiner referred to column 2, lines 51-54 of Griffin to support the Examiner's conclusion that Griffin has at least one ground terminal. With respect to claim 3, the Examiner concluded that "the ground terminal (40) Is formed such that the terminal pieces (38) project from at least one lateral edge of a busbar (40) having the grounding portion (44) at an end thereof."

Claims 8-15 were rejected under 35 USC(a) as being obvious over Seki in view of Griffin. The Examiner concluded that Seki discloses a joint connector with a power receptacle, a load receptacle and a joint terminal having a busbar and a plurality of terminal pieces. The Examiner acknowledged that Seki does not suggest press-fitting any terminals into the housing and that Seki does not suggest a grounding terminal.

Accordingly, the Examiner relied upon Griffin to overcome these admitted deficiencies of Seki.

The application explains that joint connectors are known and connectors with grounding features also are known. However, the application also explains that these connectors are connected separately and that a suitable installation space, including a space for the connecting operation is necessary. The subject invention was made in an effort to make a connector that is more space efficient while simultaneously achieving the functions of a joint connector and a grounding connector.

Griffin merely relates to a joint connector and is roughly comparable to the admitted prior art joint connector. Griffin merely identifies one of the terminal pieces on the busbar as being a ground terminal and then treats that ground terminal piece exactly as every other terminal piece on the Griffin connector. In this regard, a separate connector or a connector with a dedicated ground terminal is required to be connected to a Griffin-type joint connector receptacle. The ground connector or the ground terminal fitting then must include a ground lead that extends to still another ground connector for grounding. The figures of Seki would suggest that the busbars are insert molded therein (see FIG. 13). Griffin, on the other hand, appears to press-fit the busbars into position.

In contrast to the references, the invention defined by the amended claims herein provides a ground terminal with a ground portion spaced from the connecting portions of the housing. The grounding terminal of amended claim 1 further has a plurality of terminal pieces in at least one of the connecting portions. Thus, the grounding portion of the ground terminal defined by amended claim 1 can be connected directly to a ground and the assembly of a grounding terminal, a grounding wire and at least one grounding

connector required by Griffin is avoided. Accordingly, the connector of the subject invention can be smaller and can be connected more efficiently to both a ground and to the power and load circuits. Griffin has no suggestion of these features. Accordingly, amended claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-7 are believed to be patentable over Griffin.

Claim 8 has been amended in a manner similar to claim 1 to more clearly define the grounding portion and its position relative to the power and load receptacles. Additionally, claim 8 defines the grounding terminal as being insert-molded into the housing so that the busbar of the grounding terminal is surrounded by a unitary matrix of resin in the intermediate wall of the housing. In contrast, claim 8 defines the joint terminal as being pressed through press-in holes in the intermediate wall. Counsel and the applicants are unaware of any relevant art that shows a connector with a grounding terminal insert molded therein and with joint terminals press-fit therein. The insert molding of the grounding terminal provides manufacturing and assembly efficiencies. The press-fitting of the joint terminals enables design changes to be made easily merely by selecting an appropriate joint terminal to be press-fit into the housing in accordance with the unique needs of a particular model of vehicle in which such a joint connector might be disposed. Accordingly, amended independent claim 8 and its dependent claims 9-11 are believed to be patentable over the hypothetical combination of Griffin and Seki.

Method claim 12 has been amended to incorporate similar limitations with respect to the molding of the housing so that the grounding portion is not in the receptacles and then subsequently mounting the joint terminal in the molded housing. For the reasons explained above, it is believed that the method claims are patentable over the applied art.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the claims remaining in the application are directed to patentable subject matter and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicants attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: September 7, 2004